

CHURCH AND THE CITY

Battlements of Isolation Fall

By Father P. David Finks

Christmas is the feast of quiet hope. The season always pulls me out of daily concerns, encourages me to stand up, look around, reassess, and dream a little about the future.

My Christmas mood this year is highlighted by the simultaneous "birth into eternal glory" of two doctors of the Church, Karl Barth and Thomas Merton. In an age of blinding technological advances these men reminded us of the greatness and power of God our Father.

Karl Barth has influenced all modern theological thinking. Catholic and Protestant. "He is a mountain," says Dr. Benjamin Reist of San Francisco Seminary, "to get beyond him you have to climb over him."

Thomas Merton in his monastic ascent of the "Seven Storey Mountain" was a modern American contemplative. His may well be the Spirit which will help us develop a religious life more suited to the needs of the twentieth century. His death in Bangkok, in the heart of the awakening third world, studying age old eastern mysticism, may be indicative of new directions for contemplative piety.

Both Barth and Merton were great lovers of the Scriptures. They were men of action who spoke out strongly and pointedly against the evils of war and human oppression.

Thoughts of these two well-loved religious thinkers make me want to address a greeting of quiet Christmas hope to Father Paul Cuddy in his weekly anxiety for the Church of Christ. Father Cuddy often writes to me and about me from the other side of this page.

Old walls are crumbling in the church. They do not seem to be sup-

porting walls or foundation. Only the battlements of isolation and fear of the other Christian churches and of the evolving wisdom of the world seem to be disintegrating.

You have called our attention several times to a recent book by Frank J. Sheed as though to bring us back from the siren call of younger, more radical theologians. Those of my generation know well F. J. Sheed, Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, Pius Parsch, Karl Adam. These men rescued us from the "dry bones" of our philosophy and theology manuals in the seminary a decade ago.

But, the very hunger that they awakened in us to return to the sources of theology, liturgy, human thought is the same hunger that leads us to study their successors who continue the reform of the teaching and life of the church in our time.

The world with its technologies and bloody battles, its thermonuclear capacities and urban decay, its third world revolutions and struggle for internationalism is hungry for life and the food of the Spirit. The problem is that too often instead of "words of life," the hungry receive only, as Malcolm Boyd says, the canned wisdom of the past given out with great pomp and sound effects by church leaders making like the "wonderful Wizard of Oz." That is where the generation gap yawns widely.

Maybe it is time to stop the family quarrels over housekeeping details of liturgy and the like, and disputes over whose generation is the greatest. We all, I think, want to avoid theological monism, ancient or modern. In trying to preach God's word to men, including bishops and preachers, we need the guidance of the whole brotherhood of believers.

NOW HEAR THIS ...

Age of Wonders Lives Again

By Father Richard Torney

Two weeks ago even the most optimistic spirits were beginning to wish Christmas could evaporate from the calendar, or could somehow be avoided by everyone but little children.

We were all tired of a too-long sales campaign by the stores - colds and the flu made many too miserable to live, or to be lived with. Concern about inevitably meeting the irresistible germs made the rest of us as hopelessly apprehensive as those Australians in that TV rerun, "On the Beach", who so morbidly waited for the atomic dust to blow "down-under" and take them to eternity.

We were bored by the unexciting Mr. Nixon - Peace was stilled by a Parisian game of who-will-sit-where - Campuses everywhere throbbled with bitter confrontations - Television shows were boring and the local movie menu was growing gamier.

Despite new promises, housing wasn't going up, rats were still biting inner-city kids and crime statistics frightened every neighborhood.

On top of all this, we were feeling sick and a trifle cynical about the state of our Church: there had been so many months of an accelerating mood of criticism of our leaders for man-made confusions and human imperfections in the U.S. Family of God.

What was a man to be "merry" about? Our black mood, growing for some months, was meanly self-cen-

tered, petty and depressing. But it was so real many found no cheer in the approach of Christmas.

We longed for some liberation, some new will to stretch out creatively, some infusion to restore zestful pride in our times and hopes for tomorrow.

Unnoticed by most of us, the daily Advent liturgy preparing our Family for Christmas was centered on a "liberation" theme. The Church has been praying officially, day after day, in these recent weeks (in the Mass-prayers and the priests' Office) that in expectation of the Saviour's anniversary mankind might break off the chains of fear and gloom and repression.

Its message was not limited to the trumpet songs about a Redeemer born centuries ago. It was saying to our times, which knew all too well that Christ would not be reborn in the flesh. "Reach out for His grace, for this reminder of His care for you. Forget what we are and how we have abused ourselves. Let's start again to live in the joy of what God has made us."

And then came the weekend of the departure of Apollo 8 and the freeing of the Pueblo crew! Three men took off on an audacious voyage of celestial exploration and 82 came back from eleven months of imprisonment and torture. And suddenly, for many people, life was "a new ball game."

Man could survive the worst that fiendish minds could devise to crush

the wisdom of age and the insights of youth.

Several years ago Joseph C. Wilson retired as president of Xerox Corporation to become chairman of the board of directors. At that time in the course of an interview with a national news magazine he said some things that may be apposite in this context.

Mr. Wilson said that he probably knew more at 57 years old than running Xerox than he had known at 45, but that he was not as quick to take chances as he had been at 45. Since business grows only in the hands of those unafraid to dare new things, he was turning over the presidency to the capable and innovative Peter McCullough.

The Christian community must have a similar realism about growth and the diversification of roles. Otherwise the church as institution does not appear as the present day fulfillment of the Christmas promise of hope and new life.

Walls are crumbling. Sheed and Maritain, Pere Teilhard, the brothers Rahner, Barth, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, the newer voices of Schillebeeckx, Kueng, Curran, Metz, all are helping the whole church to articulate the Gospel for our own day.

We need now not warnings but many more bishops, pastors, laymen, pastoral planners who will develop the mission of the Church to meet the human and social needs of people today.

"The Word became enfleshed and came to dwell among us." The sign of Jesus' presence is the effectiveness of the Gospel-Word, not merely the repeating of it.

May the peace of the Lord be with you!



his body and degrade his mind. Man could live and function at a realm no human had ever traveled before and where no life of any kind had ever been.

These were symbols of liberation and exaltation so needed by so many of us.

Apollo 8's almost unbelievable intention to cross 230,000 miles of emptiness toward a shining target man could never touch before put on us a "spell of amazement and expectation" (as Pope Paul said it last Sunday). Neither perils nor uncertainties nor lack of precedents have deterred the astronauts and their space ship. They are inspirations for the spirits of each of us.

As I write this, on Christmas Eve morning, Apollo 8 is circling the moon, looking at its shadowy craters and hills from 70 miles away. With a TV camera-eye we have been permitted to marvel at the greatness and wonder of the Creator who fashioned this drab and dusty-dry floating ball which the next space traveler may actually land on. Our age of wonders has come to life again!

Man once worshipped the moon and he still admits that the moon stirs the ocean's tides and bubbles the hearts of poets and lovers. But I submit that in Christmas week of '68 the moon and three men exploring it have given liberation to a tired and discouraged generation. We can forget what we have been and start to live again in the joy of what God made us to be.

Church in Nazi Germany Probed

New York — (RNS) — The real lessons of the German Churches struggle with Nazism have still, more than 30 years later, not been fully learned, a Canadian historian holds in a new book soon to be published here.

John S. Conway sifted through hundreds of documents captured from Nazi archives in writing "The Nazi Persecution of the Church."

The book's main focus is on the persecution of the Churches during the Hitler regime, but Conway is equally concerned with the question of guilt: Why did the German people - particularly Christians - allow the unprecedented atrocities of Nazism to be perpetrated in their name?

"Theologically speaking," writes Conway, "the problem of how the Church can confront its community with the need for taking up arms against injustice and violence has never been solved."

High on the list of factors cited as responsible for "meager" German church resistance to Nazism is "the ingrained tradition of pietism." The book warns against confining religious loyalties to the "narrow goal of personal redemption" and a failure to carry "Christian principles into the political life."

Conway also found a "German

readiness to accept the existing political order without criticism . . ." as a cause for Nazi ascendancy. "The German church was not equipped with a theology adequate to sustain any critical attack upon the actions of its political rulers," he says.

Another element, he states, "was the Churches' basically conservative outlook, which led them to accept without question the claim of Nazism to be the only alternative to Communism."

Hitler proclaimed in 1933 that his government would "seek firmly to protect Christianity as the basis of our whole morality . . ." Yet in a conversation with an associate, he said: "Neither of the denominations - Catholic or Protestant, they are both the same - has any future left . . . One is either a Christian or a German. You can't be both."

Conway's examination of these incidents reveals that Hitler changed oppressive measures only when they provoked a reaction, either among German churchmen or abroad, that threatened the government.

Such a threat was caused in 1941 by Roman Catholic Bishop Clemens August Galen of Muenster, who became the spokesman and focal point for vehement reaction to Nazi expropriation of church schools, hospitals and other institutions. Bishop

later Cardinal - Galen expanded his complaint into a dramatic campaign against the Nazi practice of euthanasia for the mentally ill.

The Conway book attributes Bishop Galen's success to the fact that he spoke "for a public which was already aroused and which instantly responded. It was because strong feelings of outrage already existed over the liquidation of the mentally ill that the Nazis dared not take any action against the protesting church leaders."

"But such strong feelings did not generally exist among Christians," the author says, in regard to Jews. Conway finds that churchmen were, throughout most of the Nazi regime, mostly silent on the treatment of Jews.

The Catholic bishops in 1941 protested on behalf of "non-Aryan Catholics" or Jews married to Catholics who were affected by the Nazi extermination policy. They did not protest atrocities as such, Conway wrote.

"Confronted with government measures of unprecedented ferocity, and with a people almost wholly persuaded of the injustices of the Jews," the German Catholic leaders made but little effort to arouse their congregations against the enormity of the atrocities perpetrated by their political leaders."

ON THE RIGHT SIDE

You Can't Take It With You

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

It seems impious to suggest that the dead subvert their own wishes, and unwittingly cause serious injustices and inconveniences. Yet this is frequently true.

Some months ago I wrote an article: "The Importance of Having a Will." The reasons proposed were: 1) to minimize confusion at the time of death; 2) to spell out in clear language what one really wants done with his estate; 3) to make provision for spouses and their children immediately at the time of death; 4) to use the legal provisions to avoid unwarranted taxes on the estate, especially in contributions to charity.

More people spoke to me personally expressing their interest in the article on wills than on any other subject. This is deflating to a fired-up priest who hopes to stir up the embers of love and loyalty and spirituality by his writings.

However, it does vindicate my long held theory: that the rank and file of Catholics are more concerned with cash, property and potatoes than in grace and parish councils. Grace is the least accepted perhaps with a pathetic disinterest. But property stirs an alert gleam in the eye.

It may be regretted. But I think it is so. And my whole priestly life has been spent in stressing the notion of being, or of reality.

Most agree that an adult should have a will. Many have made their wills. The trouble is that conditions change, and frequently wills scream to be updated. Often a person dies leaving an out of date will, and destroys part or all of what he really wants.

For example: A friend of mine was the executor of a will of a relative in California. He said: "It was incredible! Tim was an astute business man. He was a bachelor and left over \$100,000. His closest blood relatives were a raft of cousins. Most of them meant nothing to him. However, he had a secretary who was like a mother to him; so he willed 80% of his estate to her. But she died two years before he did! And he never changed his will! So all the cousins - most of whom didn't even bother to come to his funeral - were at the lawyer's door with their hands out. And since that is the law, they got their legal share, which certainly was not Tim's real intention."

Now why in heaven's name would an intelligent man like that neglect to change his will after his secretary's death to a new, up to date will? This would have distributed his goods as he really wanted them to be distributed! I suppose the answer is the same as in the neglect of making any will: not lack of good intention, but sheer carelessness. Putting off until the tomorrow which may never come.

It might be a good meditation for the end of the year: "Is my soul prepared for God? Is my property prepared for distribution as I want it, when I leave this mortal coil? Are my children properly protected and provided for? As God has given to me, are there any charities or individuals I should remember?"

God bless your New Year!

A New Indoor Sport

This year Americans have a new indoor sport to supplement their arm-chair quarterbacking of professional football.

The sport is called "What's Wrong With Those People" and it can be played in the comfort and safety of your own livingroom. It is gaining wide acceptance and may soon rival jogging as the suburban "in-group" activity.

The rules are simple. First you decide who you will select as "those people" and then you begin an active discussion of what's wrong with them. There are many categories from which "those people" can be selected. The current favorites are ghetto trouble-makers, student revolutionaries, socio-economic drop-outs, peaceniks, yuppies and demonstrators of every genus and species.

The sport consists of firmly establishing that your views are truly right and just and that all dissenting views are born of ignorance, malice or yearning for anarchy. Then you begin a lively discussion of "What's Wrong With Those People" which ends in a warm glow of camaraderie shared by those secure in the belief that they are the chosen people.

This game has all the warmth and appeal of a lynching. But it can be put to some use. Let's reverse the game and see what "those people" say and think about the "chosen ones" who have become such avid devotees of this all too popular sport.

Individuals lumped into the category of "those people" refer to the "chosen ones" in ritualistic terms such as "the establishment," "the power of structure," "fat cats" and many others. They say many of the

same things about the "chosen ones" that have been said about them.

For example, they say that the "chosen ones" are immoral, hypocritical, self-centered, not truly Christians, anti-Communists, anarchists and apathetic.

"The 'chosen ones' say that 'those people' are immoral, hypocritical, self-centered, not truly Christians, Communist dupes, anarchists and apathetic.

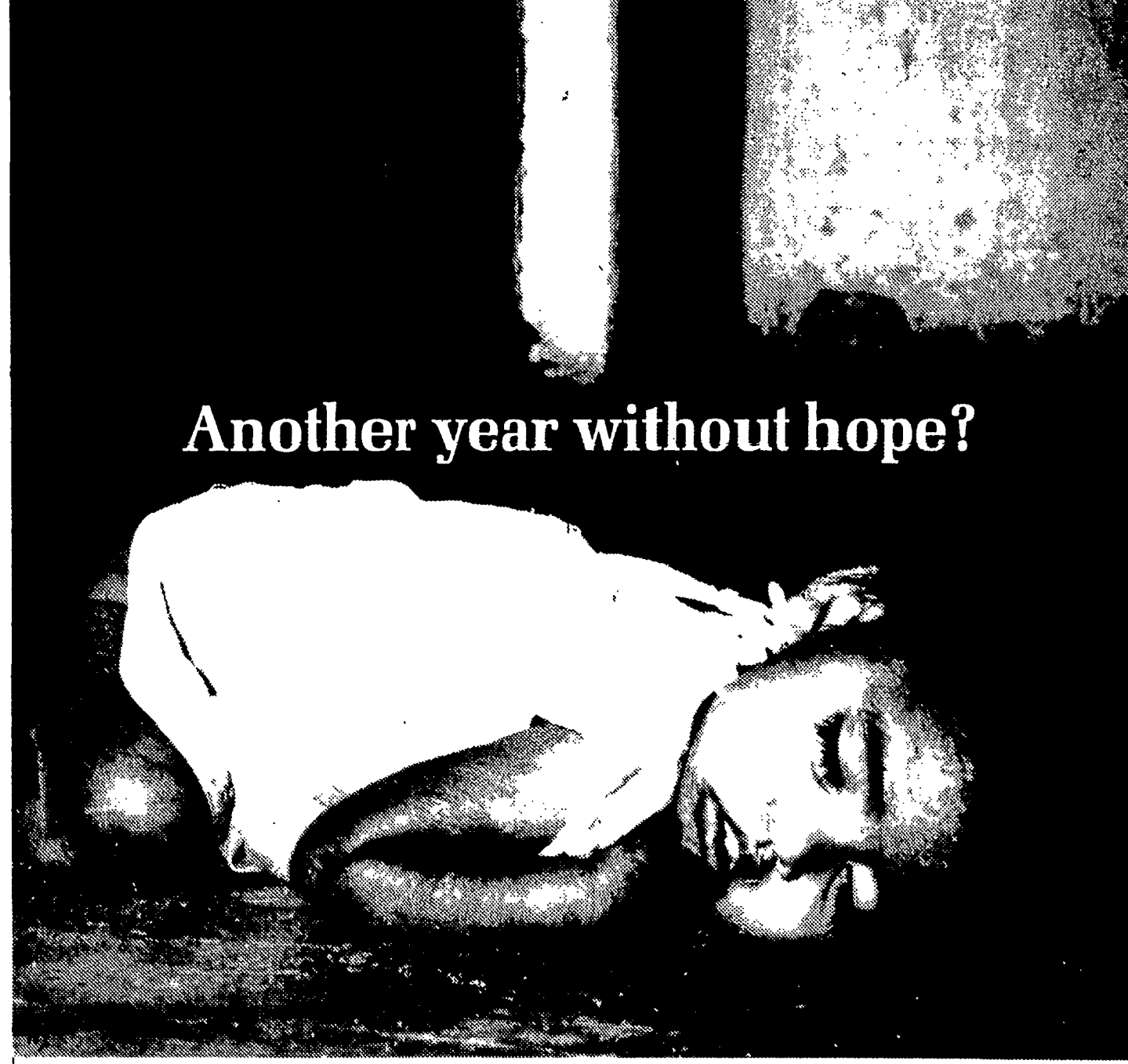
What is perhaps more ironic is that both sides have been playing this game for many years under the same self-serving rules adding only minor changes in terminology. Whether or not you qualify as a "chosen one" or "those people" depends entirely on who is defining the terms.

The "chosen ones" say that "those people" are not true Christians because they do not adhere to any perceivable codified morality.

"Those people" say the "chosen ones" are not true Christians because they have only the external trappings of religiosity and feel no real commitment to social justice or human rights.

The game goes on and on accomplishing nothing and widening the gap between people who would be capable of meaningful dialogue if they stopped playing games for awhile and took the time to really communicate. The time has come to stop playing those foolish semantic games. There is too much at stake to dissipate potentially productive mental energy in nihilistic word games.

(The Catholic News, New York City, 12/12/68.)



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